2003 Beekeeping Industry Commodity Profile

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Introduction

2003 has been an exceptional production season for most beekeepers in Ontario. The average production that was reported through the survey of beekeepers was 103 pounds per hive. There was an excellent honey flow into early September also. The price for bulk honey has been unexpectedly high at $2-2.25 per pound. These high prices may have a detrimental effect on those beekeepers that had built up their markets beyond their own production capacity. Many of them are not able to meet the higher prices as the retail market is lagging behind with increases. Many will not have the volume of honey to supply their normal markets and may loose their market share with the present high prices.

Varroa mites are now throughout Ontario except in the Thunder Bay area. Resistance to Apistan has occurred in the eastern area of Ontario. It has now been also confirmed in Niagara, Haldimand-Norfolk, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington regions. An Emergency Use Permit was in place for Check-Mite ™ Strips for the counties east of Frontenac until December 31, 2002. It is expected that this Emergency Use permit will be renewed for 2003 and the area expanded to include all of Ontario. All other border areas were tested with negative results. It will be important for all beekeepers across the province to report any incidences of high Varroa populations to their bee inspectors so that follow up testing can be done. The finds of resistance do not relate to movement across the border. We are reaching the limit of the life of Apistan with out an alternative to alternate with to extend the life of both chemicals. The spring of 2002 was particularly cool and the present application methods of Formic did not give the level of control of Varroa as would be desired. Therefore Varroa populations were very high going into fall. The late fall honey flow did not contribute to getting varroa treatments on in a timely manner. There was Varroa damage to colonies in the fall of 2002 and undoubtedly will show up with higher winter loss. NOD Industries of Stirling, Ontario has worked with the OBA Tech-Transfer Program to develop a better application method which they hope to have in place for the spring of 2003 to off set the kind of problems that occurred in the spring of 2002. The hygienic testing and now the Harbo tests are continuing with the bee breeders to develop bees that are resistant to Varroa. The Russian stock, which has proven good resistance to Varroa, was brought in for the third season. It will be necessary to keep bringing stock as long as the USDA keeps releasing stock. Francois Petit of Cassleman is established as the "Breeder" for the Russian stock and will have queens available for beekeepers in the Apistan resistant areas next spring as he is in the resistant area in Eastern Ontario. Davies Apiaries of Seeley's Bay will also have the Russian stock available for those outside the area.

Honey Bee Tracheal Mites (HBTM) continue to spread slowly. About 45 % of the colonies in Ontario have both mites. Again Thunder Bay has neither mite. Even with the cool conditions, HBTM was well controlled with the spring treatment of Formic Acid. The HBTM breeding work with the "Quick Test" continues with the Bee Breeders.

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Number of Beekeepers and Bees in Ontario

The number of beekeepers has slowly receded from 5200 in the late 1980's to 3,000 for the year 2,002. Beekeepers are spread quite evenly over the agricultural areas of Ontario. The 22 local beekeeper associations have had an important role in keeping beekeepers informed as to how to work with the mites.

Colony numbers in Ontario have slowly dwindled down from a high of 115,000 in the late 1980's to 81,000 in 1998, 85,000 in 1999, and 80,000 in 2,000, 80,000 in 2001and 75,000 in 2002.

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Economic Values

The Farm Value for honey is 75,000 colonies x 103 pounds per hive = 7,725,000 pounds x $2.03 (current price of honey) = $15,681,750 for the bulk honey. Beekeepers sell about 10% of the pounds (772,500) at this price to the honey packers. They sell another 10% of the pounds (772,500) to other beekeepers at $0.15 per pound above the bulk price which nets an additional $115,875. This 772,500 pounds is sold at wholesale and nets an additional $0.58 per pound for a total contribution of $448,050. Beekeepers sell about one million pounds from their honey houses directly to consumers at $2.50 per pound. These sales add $470,000 to the total value. The remaining 6,180,000 pounds are sold wholesale to wholesalers or retailers and this adds about $.58 per pound to the value for a total contribution of $3,584,400. Beeswax at 1.5 pounds per 100 pounds of honey and worth of $2.50 per pound adds $193,125 to the total value. An estimated 12,000 colonies are moved for spring pollination at an average price of $52.00 per colony, which adds $624,000 in total value. Approximately 3000 colonies are moved for summer pollination of field crops, at $90.00 per colony for a total additional value of $270,000. Fourteen thousand queen bees at $18. each adds $252,000. 4000 nucs at an average price of $90.00 nets to the beekeepers an additional $360,000. Ten thousand pounds of pollen at $6.00 per pound adds $60,000 to the total value.

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Sales and Value

Item Beekeepers Sell	Value
Bulk Honey	15,681,750.00
Sales to Other Beekeepers (Added Value)	115,875.00
Added Value of Sales to Other Beekeepers	448,050.00
Sales from Honey House (Added Value)	470,000.00
Sales Wholesale (Added Value)	3,584,400.00
Beeswax	193,125.00
Spring Pollination	624,000.00
Summer Pollination	270,000.00

Queen Bees	252,000.00
NUCs	360,000.00
Pollen	60,000.00
Total	$22,059,200.00

Direct Pollination value contributed to Ontario Agriculture by honey bees is estimated at $141,000,000 for crops grown in Ontario that benefit from honey bee pollination.

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Other Contact Organizations

The Ontario Beekeepers Association (OBA) represents the beekeepers of Ontario at the provincial level. The OBA operates with 14 voluntary directors. Pat Westlake is the Business Administrator. The OBA publishes the "Sting" six times per year to communicate to the beekeepers of Ontario and is available with membership in the organization. You can contact the OBA at phone (519 - 565 - 2622), fax (519 565-5452), or by email at info@ontariobee.com. Check out their Website at http://www.ontariobee.com.

The OBA is in turn represented at the federal level by Canadian Honey Council (CHC). CHC has eight directors from across Canada that represents each area. Heather Clay is the Executive Secretary. The CHC publishes "Hivelites" four times per year to communicate with beekeepers, and is available with membership in the organization. Contact the CHC by phone (403-208-7141), fax (403-547-4317) or by email at chc-ccm@telusplanet.net. Check out their Website at http://www.honeycouncil.ca.

For more information please contact Doug McRory, Provincial Apiarist, OMAF, Guelph.

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